

# Chapter 11

The narrator recounts a meeting with Xan, the Warden, after three years of separation. Despite their past association as adviser and leader, the encounter is formal and guarded, with Xan's all-male entourage emphasizing his preference for hierarchical loyalty. The narrator is picked up by a new driver, Hedges, who reveals that George, the previous driver the narrator liked, died in an accident—a detail met with suspicion but left unexplored. The narrator reflects on the strained relationship with Xan, who had demanded unwavering loyalty, and wonders if their past rift can be mended during the upcoming meeting.

The narrator's thoughts shift to the Council members who govern alongside Xan, each overseeing specific domains like Industry, Health, and Justice. Though responsibilities are divided, decisions are collective, and the narrator recalls their own marginal role as an adviser without voting power. This lack of authority, rather than incompetence, may have driven their departure. The Council's dynamics are marked by subtle tensions, particularly the narrator's sense of being resented by others, except for Martin Woolvington, Xan's closest ally, whose pragmatic loyalty and military background make him indispensable.

Martin Woolvington stands out as Xan's most trusted Council member, combining practicality with relentless efficiency. His doodles of Napoleonic soldiers during meetings reveal a disciplined mind, and his unwavering support for Xan contrasts with the narrator's more ambivalent position. Felicia Rankin, another Council member, is described as a sharp and acerbic lawyer whose striking yet asymmetrical appearance fascinates and unsettles the narrator. Their mutual antipathy is exacerbated by the narrator's fixation on her looks and her contemptuous demeanor.

The chapter concludes with Harriet Marwood, the eldest Council member, whose grandmotherly persona masks a formidable ability to sway public opinion. Her role in

legitimizing government policies, no matter how harsh, underscores the regime's reliance on psychological manipulation. The narrator's reflections on these figures reveal a world where power is maintained through loyalty, control, and carefully crafted appearances, leaving little room for dissent or individuality. The chapter sets the stage for the narrator's confrontation with Xan and the unresolved tensions of their past.

